MAJOR FREDERICK LESLIE BIDDLE DSO

Born Clifton Hill in 1885

Lived with his family at 131 Powlett Street, East Melbourne 1895–1914

Educated Hawthorn College; qualified twice for university entrance

Joined the Citizen Military Forces as a gunner c1904; promoted to Captain in 1913

Employed as warehouseman then departmental manager for Messrs J F & H Roberts, soft goods merchants, Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Enlisted 17 August 1914 and appointed to 4th Battery, 2nd Field Artillery Brigade with rank of Captain

Embarked 20 October 1914 aboard HMAT *Shropshire*

Landed at Anzac Cove 25 April 1915; wrote to his family

> ***We were the first battery ashore and our 'A' gun started immediately it got off the beach by wiping out a 4 gun battery which had been playing the deuce with our fellows ...***
>
> ***The work here for us is the most extraordinary thing and quite unlike anything we have ever done. No horses are used, the guns being hauled about the hills with about 100 men to a gun and they have to have frequent spells.***

Promoted to Major and sailed for France with his Brigade March 1916

Suffered a gunshot to the head 24 July 1916 at Pozières

Evacuated to hospital in England; rejoined unit to command his brigade September 1916

Awarded DSO for his action over three days before this wounding: when communication lines were cut, repeatedly braved enemy fire to gain access to telephone stations of other units

Wounded again in action 16 August 1917 during heavy bombardment early in the Third Battle of Ypres

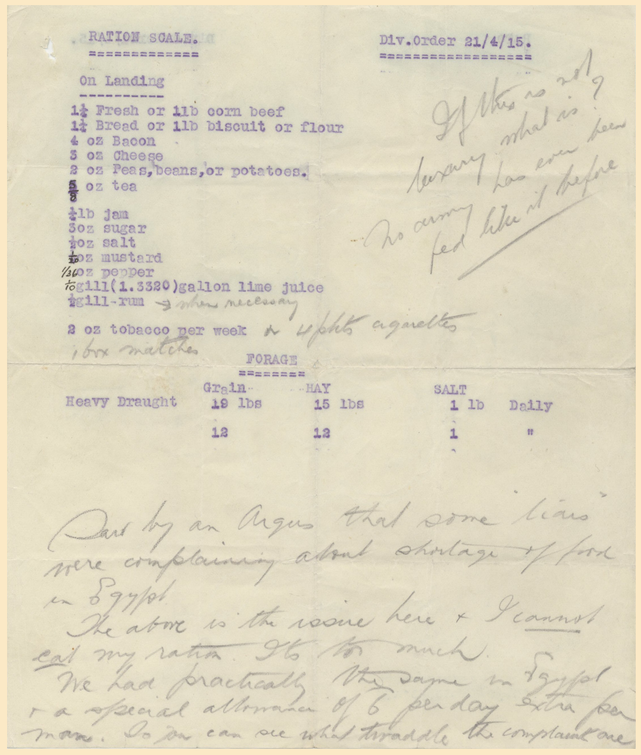
Died next day of his wounds at 32nd Casualty Clearing Station, Brandhoek, Belgium

Buried at Brandhoek New Military Cemetery near Vlamertinghe, 6 kms west of Ypres

Recounted his experiences in letters to his parents at 92 Vale Street, East Melbourne, later donated to the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.



Frederick Leslie Biddle, c.1914. AWM A01511



RATION SCALE. Div.Order 21/4/15.

On Landing

1¼ Fresh or 1lb corn beef
1¼ Bread or 1lb biscuit or flour
4 oz Bacon
3 oz Cheese
2 oz Peas, beans, or potatoes.
5/8 oz tea

½lb jam
3oz sugar
½oz salt
½oz mustard
1/80 oz pepper
½gill(1.3320)gallon lime juice
½gill-rum → when necessary

2 oz tobacco per week & 4 pkts cigarettes
1 box matches

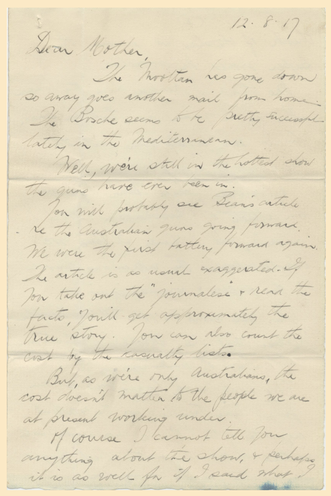
FORAGE

	Grain	HAY	SALT	
Heavy Draught	19 lbs	15 lbs	1 lb	Daily
	12	12	1	"

Rations, 21 April 1915, annotated by Biddle. AWM



Four officers at Gallipoli, 1915. Major FL Biddle holds champagne. AWM A01512



12.8.17

Dear Mother

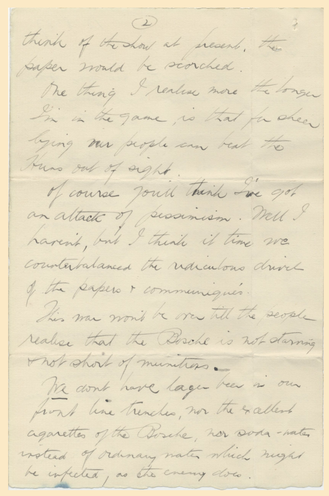
Re Mortimer we gone down so away goes another mail from home. The Broke seems to be pretty successful lately in the Mediterranean.

Well, we're still in the settled area the guns never even thin.

For mile infantry are slowly attacking & the Australian guns going forward. We were the first battery forward again. The attack is so much exaggerated. By the time you take out the "journalese" & leave the facts, you'll get approximately the true story. You can also count the cost by the casualty lists.

But, as we're only Australians, the cost doesn't matter & the people we are at present working under.

Of course I cannot tell you anything about the show, & probably it is as well for if I said what I



(2)

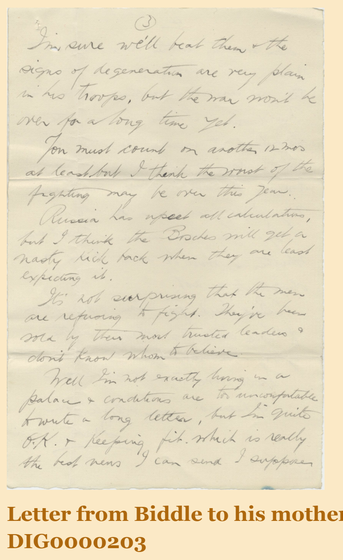
think of the Low at present, the paper would be scorched.

The thing I realise more the longer I'm in the game is that for others trying war people can't see the trees for the wood.

Of course you'll think I've got an attack of evacuation. Well I haven't, but I think at time we counterbalance the ridiculous drivel of the papers & communiqués.

This war won't be won till the people realise that the Broke is not storming & not short of munitions.

We don't want lager beer in our front line trenches, nor the talked of cigarettes of the Broke, nor soda-water instead of ordinary water which ought to be injected, as the enemy does.



(3)

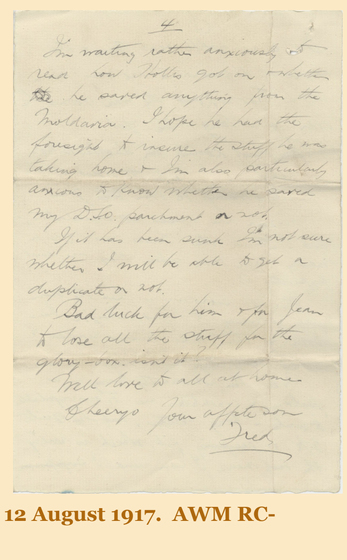
I'm sure we'll beat them & the signs of degeneration are very plain in the troops, but the war won't be over for a long time yet.

You must count on another winter at least but I think the worst of the fighting may be over this year.

Russia has upset all calculations, but I think the Broke will get a nasty kick when they are least expecting it.

It's not surprising that the men are refusing to fight. They've been sold by their most trusted leaders & don't know whom to believe.

Well I'm not exactly living in a palace & conditions are unimaginable & write a long letter, but I'm quite O.K. & keeping fit. Which is really the best news I can send I suppose.



(4)

I'm waiting rather anxiously to hear how Mother got on & whether she saved anything from the Wolhavia. I hope she had the foresight & incense the stuff she was taking home & I'm also particularly anxious to know whether she saved my D.S.O. parchment & not.

If it has been saved I'm not sure whether I will be able to get a duplicate or not.

Bad luck for him & for Jean & lose all the stuff for the glory of it.

Well love to all at home

Cheerio Your affte son

Fred.

Letter from Biddle to his mother, 12 August 1917. AWM RC-DIG0000203



FAB headquarters, Gallipoli. In centre Biddle sits in front of dugout. AWM H15139



Ypres, Belgium, looking towards Brandhoek, 31 October 1917. At bottom is Cavalry Barracks, the headquarters of the 1st Division. AWM H15139